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SONGS

OF THE

PRIMA DONNA

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TO EVERY PRIMA DONNA:

Thou singest from thy heart through many hearts toward the Heart of the sky. Thou singest sweetly and truly, as a prima donna can and should. If thou knowest thyself, thou knowest what power inspires thee to sing. The same power inspires me to write thy feelings in words of song.

Then sing thy feelings in my words, with all the majestic, spontaneous melody that thy soul can teach thy voice. The world will hear thee, and will call thee *primitissima donna*; but thou shalt soar above the applause of the world.

“Sine sanctitate, nemo Dominum videbit.”



SONGS OF THE PRIMA DONNA.

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MUSIC.

Great music is a call from Heaven to men,
An invitation to eternal things;
It calls the transient wanderer back again
To hear what joyful songs each seraph sings:

So Mozart left his labors willingly,
To join the mighty chorus of the dead;
So friendless Beethoven knew Deity,
And wrote his praises as the Master said.

What flights in music shall we realize!
Now only preludes do we mortals know:
Small streams in human wonder-plains arise,
And into those majestic rivers flow:

Our phantasy is taught in heavenly strains,
To charm us to the Home of great refrains.

THE GENIUS OF A LYRIST.

Ambrosial food of pictured sympathies
Was gently melted on a lyrist's lip,—
That all his words in sensuousness could dip
To sing delicious, beauteous melodies:

So was he bless'd with lovely qualities;
Olympic gods no sweeter nectar sip,
Nor Eros joining hearts on Hymen's trip,
Than he, array'd 'neath floral canopies.

So e'er his songs were fill'd with fairest things
That never can be moved by Fortune's gust:
All building-stones must moulder; Ruin flings

All cherish'd vanities on heaps of rust;
But songs of Beauty still endure when kings
And palaces have crumbled into dust.

AN ALLEGORY OF EXPERIENCE.

I.

Some years ago began a human dream
Of waking life, that floated o'er the stream
Of time, — from little rivulets and springs,
And youthful scenes of fascinating things.

The dream progress'd upon a wider brook
Within a neighborhood of cheery look;
And life proceeded happily among
The beams of beauty and the chords of song.

Then visions of each lovely day gone by,
Predicted that still fairer days were nigh;
And while the merry birds were singing lays,
The dream was sweeten'd by the notes of praise.

The brook expanded to a river wide,
And all the scenes and sounds were magnified;
The breeze was peaceful as the gentlest gale;
The stream flow'd smoothly through a blooming vale.

'Twas torrid summer, and the solar heat
Began to leave the landscape parch'd and dry;
Ere long amassing vapors like a fleet,
Were sailing swiftly through the brilliant sky.

The darkening clouds grew hostile in their flight
And threaten'd gravest ruin in the gloom:
The lightning-flashes dazed the strongest sight,
And thunder echo'd more than cannon's boom.

Then copious showers swell'd the stream of life
To waters rushing on with might and main,
Invading quiet dales with fearful strife
And devastating all the beauteous plain;

Accumulating billows on the way,
And sweeping forth the mass of torn débris,
And lashing cumbrous waves in foaming fray,
The mighty torrent swept into the sea.

The flaming sun dispell'd th' impending gloom
And lighted up the scenes of threaten'd doom:
The sky was all resplendent with the rays,
Chromatic like the rainbow's fairest phase.

Behold! a gentle stream was flowing still
Serenely onward like a pretty rill;
Then mingled with the murmur of the trees,
There was a music in the swaying breeze:
The air was fill'd with harmonies of song
That urged my weary life to move along.

I look'd above the stream with eager stare,
And saw celestial swans ascending there:
The swans were singing as they soar'd above,
And fill'd the sky with symphonies of love;
Beholding them, my soul enlarged with glee,
Because they sang from heaven, O follow me!

TUA GUIDA BEATRICE.

Thy guide e'er beams with heavenly radiance,
And her dear heart is gloriously pure;
Behold her royal gracefulness advance:
For only she thy misery can cure.

Angelic dignity in human frame,
She bids thee to perfect thy mortal life:
For her dear sake thou leavest love of fame,
To overcome all sin with hallow'd strife.

Her words divine, in tones so beautiful,
Enchant thy soul with visions of the skies;
Her voice declares all worldly honors null,
And bids thee to immortal regions rise.

To me her sacred love and wisdom show,
That I may build an Eden here below.

NECESSARY DISCONTENT.

Hail, thou Discontentment vast!
Urge thou on the striving soul
From the halfness of the past
Toward some majestic whole.

Not by an easy life,
Nor by a painless strife,
Can we succeed to attain the divine;
Not heedless slavery
Nor careless liberty,
Fit us to build an acceptable shrine.

Many a seeming good
Is but a charming hood,
Luring the ignorant on to their doom:
Only the truly wise
Out of their errors rise
Ere all the light be obscured by the gloom.

Wake from your miseries;
Rouse all your energies;
Rise from the grave of a satisfied soul:
No transient happiness,
Deck'd with a gorgeous dress,
Can e'er retrieve final loss of life's Goal.

Far from the trackless waste,
On to the sure way haste:
Haste ere the labyrinth close round thy course;
Toward the holy place
Ever direct thy race,
Till all thy soul be engaged to thy Source.

Up then to higher home
Where souls no longer roam,
Joyfully soar thou above all distress:
Upward for evermore
To Him whom gods adore;
Seek thou the Infinite for happiness.

TRANSCENDENT CHARITY.

Ye incarnations of the thoughts benign,
Are dearer far than mortal tongues can tell:
No human soul within a finite shell,
Can speak th' infinity of Love divine.

The highest human love is but a sign
Of higher Love where all immortals dwell;
So let the harmony of life now swell
In worthy branches of th' eternal Vine.

Now in our charity may life arise
From gentleness to ever kinder deeds,
And may the sacredness of friendly ties

Urge us to give our best to human needs;
In triumphs of Good Will let us be wise,
That we may follow where the Conqueror leads.

AMICITIA AETERNA.

We should acquire the sympathies of soul
Superior to circumstance and time:
More deep than life and death, in tuneful rhyme
Let minds accord, whatever seasons roll.

Howe'er remote may be our highest goal,
Rejoice with me: the bells of earth can chime
Sweet echoes of the harmonies sublime,
That come to us from Heaven's most charming knoll.

Let energies divine our souls e'er blend
In brotherhood more close than clasping glove;
Let common hope of Home our courses bend

Together toward Paradise above;
With joy serene we then shall greet each friend:
I love thee with an everlasting Love.

A SONG OF FRIENDSHIP.

Befriend all those who need a friend,
And fear not what may be the cost;
For while you fear your aid to lend,
How many needy lives are lost!

Build self-denying charity
Within your motives and your creeds,
Until a kind fraternity
Is wrought into your thoughts and deeds.

If hatred war against your soul
To fill you with malevolence,
Then let your strongest chariots roll,
Well arm'd with true benevolence:

E'er strive against misanthropy,
With all the power of heroes strong;
For Love must win the victory
O'er all the hosts of hate and wrong.

Ye hearts, beat time to measured rhyme,
And urge your vital hope to climb:
That ye may well perform your part,
Throb upward to the highest Heart:

E'en though these hearts of living clay
Must cease their throbbings, and decay,—
Rise upward, deathless Energy,
To realms of immortality.

Now gladly tune the harp of praise
To sweeter sounds of heavenly lays;
For voices grand that seem to die,
Resume their music in the sky:

From tones of earth-born sympathy
To consummated harmony,—
Let all the chords of friendship sound
In one unending, joyful round.

The rays of human friendship dear
Come dimly from a Solar Beam,
Whose light is far more bright and clear
Than earthly eyes can ever dream:

The perfect incorporeal Love
That joins blest souls eternally,
Draws aspirations far above
To seek Elysian charity.

True friendship's everlasting song,
Divine in origin and aim,
Shall e'er delight th' angelic throng
With incense of celestial flame;

While holy virgins' ardor glows
To breathe their fervent prayers above,
Sweet music from their yearning flows
To swell the symphony of Love.

The sympathies of sisterhood
Began their course before the sun:
They still shall seek the highest good
When stars in dark oblivion run;

From that Beginningless they came,
To move throughout the range of time;
To that eternal Heart they flame,—
The Source and End of joy sublime.

*“Whosoever doeth the will of my Father in heaven,
the same is my brother and sister and mother.”—*
Matt. xii., 50.

MATRI SANCTAE MORITURAE.

O holy mother! In thy soothing arms
A weary child would find enduring rest,
But cannot: e'en thy dearest, gentlest breast, —
So full of kindest mercy, purest charms,

And all-forgiving love that ever warms
Thy heart with joy, because the transient guest
Shall have a home among immortals blest, —
To dust shall crumble from Time's fatal harms.

In thee a wondrous power draws, to bind
My life to thine; yet soon the hidden door
To soul is closed between: I cannot find

Shekinah's dwelling-place, until I soar
To regions kindling vision in the blind,
Where I can see thy charms for evermore.

AN ORPHAN'S RENUNCIATION.

Mine eyes were red with weeping;
My heart was weary and sore:
Comfort I sought, but found none,—
No, none in this world evermore.

But I fled to the Infinite Father,
And He welcomed my bitter despair;
Myself I pour'd out, and confided
My woes to th' All-Good and All-Fair:—

“O God! give me peace, lest I perish;
None else can my restlessness calm:
O Thou Infinite, All-Satisfying!
Soothe me with Thy perfect balm.

Fatherless, motherless, sisterless, brotherless,
Desolate is the world ever to me:
Lord, in Thy mercy remember mine orphanage:
Guardian, Protector, my soul trusts in Thee.”

Renuntio, renuntio delicias mundi;
Accipio, accipio laetities coeli:
Christi virgo, laete cano
Sempiternum Praeclaro.

A SONG OF THE DEAD.

When mortals shall sleep in the last narrow bed
Where the tomb closes o'er earthly dreams,
Then mortals shall know,— some with joy, **some**
with dread,—
That this life is far more than it seems.

When minglings of darkness and light all are **o'er**,
And the conflicts of hope and despair,—
Then mortals shall look on eternity's shore
To see their own destiny there.

No more shall the shouts of the warrior be heard
When the din of the conflict is past:
Then silence shall reign o'er the grave of each **word**,
And the triumph of silence shall last.

When the cycles of time shall have fled with dismay
From the scenes of rebellion and woe,
The records of action shall open that day
To judge human deeds here below:

The haughty and proud shall be conquer'd by dust,
And the hateful consumed by their hate;
The sensual shall burn in the rays of the just,
And the slothful shall mourn over fate.

The lowly and meek shall be crown'd on a throne,
When the thorns are removed and the gall;
The loving and upright shall ne'er be alone,
In the friendship of Him who loves all;

In concord and peace these will joyfully sing:—
How worthy the Lamb that was slain!
All honor and glory and praise to our King
Who freed us from sin and from pain.

THE WAVE OF TIME.

Roll on, thou rugged Wave of finite Time,
From vanish'd fogs to endless shores at last:
Bear lasting freight through all thy wreckful vast,
From troughs abysmal to the height sublime.

Let bells aboard their joy and sorrow chime,
'Mid echoes of the martial trumpet-blast,
The cheers and moans and curses of the Past,—
Until their sound be hush'd in calmer clime.

Bear all the riches of th' eternal Guild
Away from shoals and whirlpools to the Shore,—
Till righteous peace thy motions shall have still'd,

To make serene thy rolling evermore:
Then on thy calm, Eternity shall build
The throne of Him whom countless worlds adore.

FORETHOUGHTS OF PARADISE.

I.

An operatic company
Had actors wearing wings,
Presenting human sentiments
Of superhuman things:

A star-illumèd canopy
With radiant beauty shone,
And eight chromatic skies display'd
The highest art then known;

Upon a jewel'd ark of love
Were golden cherubim;
A song of future worlds was sung
By white-robed seraphim:—

O Paradise, Elysium,
Home of beatitudes!
There joyous souls fore'er shall play
In holy interludes.

2.

In winter's bleak and stormy days
May come a wondrous change, —
On nature's decoration-day,
When common things are strange:

'Mid perfect calm on barren earth
A myriad gems appear,
And every leafless tree is crown'd
Colossal chandelier. —

What wonderful presentiments
For faithful human souls!
What scenes of future loveliness
On Heaven's eternal knolls!

O Paradise, Elysium,
Throne of the blessed Lord!
There holiness fore'er shall reign,
And God shall be adored.

3.

We have not seen, we have not heard,
The joys prepared above
For righteous human souls made pure
With God's eternal Love ;

Each striver's world is but a storm
That soon shall pass away:
The sanctified shall feel the calm
Of resurrection-day.

O joyfulness of endless praise
To Him whom splendors veil!
Eternity shall bless the Lord
Whom all immortals hail.

O Paradise, Elysium,
Souls' panoramic shore!
Hosanna, hallelujah,
In Zion for evermore!

AD SOROREM ANIMI MEI.

Thy form has oft appear'd to me in dreams, —
When slumber closed my weary eyelids tight,
And soon my thoughts, with fair fantastic sight,
Made images of what my soul esteems:
With thee nearby, my charmèd heart e'er deems
Thy soul a star illuming gloomy night;
Transfigured by the rays that make thee bright,
Thou *art* my sunshine, while the darkness seems.
Fair image, stay! Or if thou takest flight
To soar to Heaven's pellucid vital streams,
Take me with thee to that transcendent height
Where dwell most glorious chromatic gleams:
There we will sing an endless song of Light,
Rejoicing in the Sun's eternal beams.

SILENCE.

Deep Silence speaks the highest human word,—
Th' unutterable utterance of life;
With fast vibrations that can not be heard,
It eulogizes human pain and strife.

That unexplored vibration-realm contains
Great energies by us not heard nor seen:
The spirits are at home where Silence reigns,
And know the royal Will by senses keen.

So genius tells the world of patient toil
Too great for mortal bodies to endure;
So Mozart sings, though buried in the soil,
That Requiem,— of transient ills the cure;

So mighty voices, when their sound has fled,
Make musical the silence of the dead.

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